

## **CITY OF SOMERVILLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS & DATA SYSTEMS POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

To ensure the proper use of the City of Somerville's Telecommunications and Data network systems which include telephones, facsimile machines, computers, printers, and other peripherals, programs, electronic mail, networks, web site, the internet, the intranet, cellular phones, radios and pagers. This policy may be updated from time to time and amended at the discretion of the Mayor.

### **POLICY**

The City of Somerville recognizes the importance of technology and access to information to enhance the City's efforts to provide its citizens the best and most efficient services. Accordingly, the City provides designated staff with the ability to send messages and information through radios, telephones, voice mail, fax mail, electronic mail, and the Internet. It is the City's policy that use of these capabilities is subject to the same management oversight as any other employee activity. The telecommunication systems are the property of the City and all communications composed, sent, or received, are the property of the City. The Telecommunications and Data systems should be used for appropriate business purposes.

### **USER RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of any employee or contractor using the City's telecommunication systems to read, understand and follow this policy. In addition, users are expected to exercise reasonable judgement in interpreting this policy and in making decisions about the use of these systems. Any person with questions regarding the application or meaning of this policy should seek clarification from appropriate management, including but not limited to the employee's Department Head, the Director of Personnel or the Information Technology Director. Failure to observe these policies could result in the loss of the privilege for the individual and others in the organization and may subject individuals to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **PROCEDURES**

- 1) The Telecommunications and Data systems should not be used for any illegal activity, including but not limited to the transmission of copyrighted or trade secret material, proprietary financial information, or similar materials, without prior management authorization in writing. The transmission of obscene, defamatory, or threatening material, or the propagation of any type of criminal activity is strictly prohibited.
- 2) The City reserves the right to retrieve, read or otherwise access any electronic communications messages or other data stored on City owned equipment for any purpose without limitation including systems maintenance and compliance monitoring. Employees should not consider voice mail, fax mail, e-mail messages or Internet postings to be personal or confidential. Further, the use of passwords for security does not imply confidentiality. All passwords are the property of the City. Electronic communications may be discoverable with or without notice, notwithstanding any password, even though messages have been deleted. Subject to certain exceptions in the law, electronic communications may also be considered public records.

3) Data and messages directed to one or more employees or officials should be treated as confidential by other employees and should be accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read any messages or data that are not sent to them unless the intended recipient gives express permission. Also, employees should not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored information unless authorized to do so.

4) The Telecommunications and Data systems should not be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages or images. Among those which are considered offensive are any messages or images which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comment which might constitute intimidation, hostile or offensive material based on one's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability. Employees must not use the Internet to access pornographic, sexually oriented, or otherwise offensive or inappropriate websites.

5) Electronic communication users shall not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the City unless expressly authorized to do so. Neither should they construct a communication so it appears to be from someone else (false identity).

6) Executable programs imported from other sites to City computers must not be used unless the Information Technology (I.T) Department has authorized them. Once authorized, they must first be subject to virus detection procedures approved by I.T Department. Private e-mail and web sites accounts are not permitted on City computer systems.

7) Upon request of a Department Head and with the approval of the Mayor, monitoring of Telecommunications and Data systems usage can and will be implemented to review employee productivity, investigate claims of criminal activity or violations of this policy as well as other legitimate business reasons.

8) The City's electronic communications systems shall not be used for commercial promotion, product endorsement or political lobbying. However, political lobbying or other activities that may be deemed to be political in nature shall be permitted to the extent that such activities are a part of the official responsibilities of an employee, provided that such activities relate to political issues rather than directly relating to specific political candidates.

9) The Telecommunications and Data systems should not be used for personal activities such as games, entertainment, and correspondence. Department Heads should resolve any questions regarding the professional relevance of the use of Telecommunications and Data systems including the content of websites and email.

10) Telecommunications and Data systems that incur per-use fees, such as cellular telephones and their radio function, should be used for necessary purposes only. Whenever possible, less expensive communications devices, such as land-line telephones or electronic mail, should be used. Employees may be asked to reimburse the City for costs associated with inappropriate or personal use.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

The use of the City's Telecommunications and Data system constitutes employee consent to monitoring of the systems and is conditioned upon strict adherence to this policy. Any employee who violates this policy or uses the City's Telecommunications and Data system for improper purposes may be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

Department Heads and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all of their employees using the City's Telecommunications and Data systems have read this policy and understand its applicability to their activities. This policy is not intended to replace day to day administrative procedures specific to each department's operational needs.